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Labor and Public Employees Committee Testimony

By Stan Sorkin, President

Connecticut Food Association

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Testimony in Opposition to HB5256: An Act Concerning the Compensation of Workers on Family Holidays.

Good afternoon, Chairman Tercyak, Chairman Osten and Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Stan Sorkin, President of the Connecticut Food Association. I am testifying on behalf of the members of the Connecticut Food Association in opposition to HB5256.

The Connecticut Food Association is the state trade association that conducts programs in public affairs, food safety, research, education and industry relations on behalf of its 240 member companies—food retailers, wholesalers, distributors, and service providers in the state of Connecticut. CFA's members in Connecticut operate approximately 300 retail food stores and 200 pharmacies. CFA's retail membership is composed of multi-store chains, regional firms, and single store independent supermarkets employing over 30,000 associates. The majority of CFA members are family-owned supermarkets. Our work force is composed of union and non-union employees with 70% of our employees part-time. Many of these part-time employees are students 18 years of age and under. Our goal is to create a growth oriented economic climate that makes Connecticut competitive with surrounding states.

We recognize and appreciate our associates' commitment to work on family holidays as they recognize the changing competitive environment and the need to serve customers.

However, the CFA is opposes to the bill for the following reasons:

- "A one size fits all" family holiday does not take into account the individual needs and costs associated of a retailer when making the decision to open on a family holiday.
- Wage policy is best handled through union contract negotiations as part of a total benefit package not a state mandate.
- Family holiday compensation may be a combination of benefits that a retailer offers his employees when they work on a family holiday. It may take the form of incremental holiday pay, employee discounts on merchandise, free meals during the hours worked. The overall package may be more beneficial to the employee.
- Thanksgiving openings have become more commonplace as the retailer looks to satisfy the shopping needs of its customers. You are penalizing the retailer for doing what's right for consumers.

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- Opening on Thanksgiving has become necessary. Brick and mortar stores need to compete with increased on-line sales especially as “Black Friday” on line sales have now started pre-Thanksgiving Thursday. You are only adding to retailers’ costs as they try to protect top line sales.
- You are penalizing stores who are opened to meet the health, food, and travel needs of consumers. You will be increasing the cost of labor for pharmacies, food stores, and gas stations. Some of these operators would decide to close leaving a void in a CT residents’ safety net. .

The Connecticut Food Association urges that you vote NO on HB5256.